"Have You Heard About an African Cinderella Story?": The Hunt For Multiethnic Literature

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Although the demand for multicultural children's literature dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, recent years have seen a rejuvenation and expansion of the field. Publishers large and small have responded to this demand in a variety of ways. This article reviews the current status of multicultural children's literature and trends in publishing. It also offers suggestions for publishers who want to be more responsive to these demands and the growing market they represent.

I received a telephone call from a school librarian who wanted to ascertain whether an African variant of Cinderella had been published recently:

Dorothy: Have you heard a rumor that an African version of Cinderella has been published?

Violet: It's not a rumor. I have a copy of the book and the illustrations are extraordinary. Believe it or not, there is a fairy tale in which the prince is literally tall, dark, and handsome.

Dorothy: Well, I have to get a copy.

The fairy tale in question was *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987), a Zimbabwean variant of Cinderella. The book received numerous accolades, including designation as a Caldecott Honor Book and the *Boston Globe-Horn Book* award for illustration. The tale is even more important because it was John Steptoe's last book, the culmination of a brilliant career. Most people who see the book have an immediate response: they ooh and ahh. The illustrations are simply stunning. After that come expressions of astonishment: the listener or reader did not know that a range of Cinderella variants exists. Then people marvel at the nontraditional portrayal of an African country.

Steptoe commented upon this ground-breaking tale and spoke about the

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cultural influences, many negative and others positive, that led to his adaptation and illustration of the tale. He spoke of the need to create the tale in response to feelings of worthlessness because of the racial climate in the United States (Natov and De Luca, 1987, 122–129). Further, he stated, "I wanted to create a book that included some of the things that were left out of my own education about people who were my ancestors" (Steptoe, 1988, pp. 25–28). Steptoe recognized that the traits extolled in Cinderella—dignity, grace, strong sense of tradition, industriousness, kindness, and consideration—were apparent in the Zimbabwean variant and in his own family. Yet, the images of himself and his culture that he received through print and electronic media were decidedly negative (Steptoe, 1988):

> You know, being a child of the fifties, I was told in white magazines that Africans said "ooga booga": they didn't come from a complex society. So I wanted to find out about African culture. And my research took me to southeast Africa where there was trade with China as far back as 500 B.C. The story I found was a fairy tale recorded by a missionary. It was originally called "The Story of Five Heads." It took me about a year to research the story and about another year and a half to write and illustrate it. (Natov and De Luca, 1986, 128–129)

Steptoe's philosophical, historical, and psychological journeys enabled him to create a legacy in children's literature. Other books, such as *Aida* (Price, 1990), *The House on Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1989), and *Tales from Gold Mountain* (Yee, 1990), are capable of generating similar responses.

A market exists for these and other "multiethnic" books, though the market remains mainly unserved. In this article, I will examine some of the reasons why multiculturalism has reemerged as an influential philosophy in education, how this reemergence affects children's literature, the current boom in children's literature, the marginalized status of multiethnic children's literature vis-à-vis this boom, and some suggestions for publishers.

Reemergence of Multiculturalism in Education

Some educators have long noted a need for education that apprises students of this nation's cultural diversity. They have viewed these efforts as resulting in the development of tolerance and expanded knowledge about the history and contributions of various ethnic, racial, and linguistic "minorities" (Banks, 1990; Gay, 1988). A number of labels identify this rejuvenated movement, including cultural diversity, multiculturalism, pluralism, and cultural pluralism. Several groups of individuals are lumped under these various labels. Among them are ethnic and racial "minorities," women and girls, poor and working-class individuals, individuals with a range of proficiency in English, the elderly, religious minorities, lesbians and gays, and the disabled (Banks, 1990; Gay, 1988; Gollnick and Chin, 1986). However,

not everyone agrees that each of these groups experiences similar treatment or suffers the same degree of racism, prejudice, or bigotry.

Various factors have acted as catalysts for the renewed emphasis on multiculturalism in schooling. First is the impact of the movements for equality, exemplified by the civil rights and women's rights struggles. Some of the individuals associated with these movements targeted educational institutions as significant in maintaining inequality and potentially powerful in eliminating inequality. Anderson (1988) documented why these conclusions were reasonable based on his analysis of the systematic limitations placed on African American education until the 1960s:

> From the end of Reconstruction until the late 1960s, black southerners existed in a social system that virtually denied them citizenship, the right to vote, and the voluntary control of their labor power. They remained an oppressed people. Black education developed within this context of political and economic oppression. Hence, although black southerners were formally free during the time when American popular education was transformed into a highly formal and critical social institution, their schooling took a different path. (p. 2)

Women and other ethnic and racial groups were denied equal educational access in a similar manner.

Second, changing demographics suggest the need for multicultural education. U.S. Census Bureau data suggest that approximately 55 percent of the U.S. population will be African, Asian, and Latino American by the year 2100 (Barbuto, 1991). Some shifts in power will occur as these groups acquire economic and political parity. Certainly, some will focus their attention on schools and the type of curricula offered. Some evidence of shifting political power can be seen in attempts to change "Eurocentric" curricula and in lawsuits filed in some states to equalize school funding. Further, because many schools, especially those in urban areas, are populated wholly by students of color, educators argue that teachers will have to possess some understanding of the students' cultures, histories, experiences, educational goals, and learning/communication styles (Banks, 1990; Gray, 1988).

A third catalyst for multicultural education results from increased incidents of "ethnoviolence" (violence precipitated because of a person's ethnicity or race), gay bashing, and abuse of the elderly and women (*Newsweek*, December 24, 1990). Once again, individuals place the burden of ameliorating or eradicating these conditions on schools. Schooling can help promote tolerance and reduce bigotry and prejudice, but other cultural institutions such as churches, the electronic media, the courts, and businesses will have to assume greater responsibility as well. For instance, the overwhelming majority of portrayals of African Americans in the news media are as entertainers, athletes, criminals, and individuals mired in abject poverty. These are realities, but they are not the only portrayals of African Americans possible.

Few, for example, know of the achievements of Dr. Raymond Massey, the current director of the National Science Foundation, or Dr. Mae Jemison, the first African American female astronaut-designee. The achievements of these and other individuals were profiled extensively in the African American press but not in the "mainstream" press.

A fourth catalyst that will affect literary curricula and publishing most is the effort to expand literary canons to include exemplars that depict multicultural experiences. Canons emerge as a result of several cultural, artistic, literary, and political processes. For instance, specific works appear on recommended reading lists; critics and scholars refer to these works continuously and compare new works to them; colleges and universities offer courses and seminars about the works; students in college preparatory classes read them, presumably, to help gain entrance into college; and "guardians of tradition" help perpetuate the notion that these works represent the best in Western literary traditions. Somehow, many of those engaged in the debates forget that many of the works enshrined in current canons are by authors who engendered new literary trends that were criticized at their inception.

The debates about expanding literary canons generated several terms that suggest opposition to or support for diversity. For instance, the phrase *race, class, and gender* elicits dichotomous responses. Some view it as an indication of the "new McCarthyism" or intolerance on the left (D'Souza, 1991; Ravitch, 1990); others perceive it as an end to ideological hegemony (Taxel, 1991). Moreover, some critics of analyses based on race, class, and gender abhor what they term the "politicization" of literature. Joel Taxel, editor of the *New Advocate*, penned an essay entitled "On the Politics of Children's Literature" (1991, pp. vii–xii). He argued that one cannot divorce evaluation of children's literature from the sociopolitical contexts that shaped that literature:

> The dominant approach to the study of children's literature *has been* to divorce the discussion of literature from issues of politics. During the 60s and 70s, for example, when the civil rights and women's movements were gathering national and international attention there were many within children's literature circles who steadfastly insisted that issues of race and gender bias had little to do with the evaluation and selection of books for young people. (p. vii)

He continued by asserting that discussions about literature have always been depoliticized, allowing for exclusion of the political: "the very claim of such a separation itself *must* be seen as profoundly political because it effectively masks and thereby removes from the realm of possible discussion that which is denied but, if we are honest, must be finally acknowledged" (p. x). Taxel contends that children need books that "address social issues of our day" and that "we must insist that important issues and themes be presented in ways that make their development inseparable from that of plot, story, and character" (p. xi). For Taxel, the works of Mildred Taylor, Vera Williams,

Lloyd Alexander, and others combine literary excellence with political and social consciousness.

Canon wars will continue even after multiculturalism becomes an integral tenet of literary curricula or the movement loses some of its prominence in schooling. Nevertheless, the resurgence of the movement affects children's literature and has brought about the demand, again, for multicultural and multiethnic literature.

Demands for Multiethnic Literature

Requests and demands for multiethnic literature are not of recent origin. Abolitionist literature in the 1800s forged a path for modern-day multiethnic literature. For example, a children's journal, *The Slave's Friend* (1836–1838), published poetry, stories, and essays that were pleas for the emancipation and equitable treatment of freed persons. The early 1900s saw a continuation of this trend for equality in literature. For instance, W. E. B. DuBois, the editor of the *Crisis Magazine*, the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, published several statements that decried the depiction of African Americans in school texts, literature, and the periodical press. His remedy for children was the creation of a periodical that he named *The Brownies' Book* (1920–1921) and a publishing company that published a collective biography for children as alternatives to the mainstream press (Harris, 1990). Carter G. Woodson, like DuBois, protested the depiction of African Americans. He, too, published journals, *The Negro History Bulletin*, for example, which devoted several pages to materials for children. He established a publishing company, The Associated Publishers, which is the oldest publishing company established by African Americans still in existence. The Associated Publishers had one of the most varied backlists, in terms of genre and number of books, of any African American publishing company until the 1960s (Harris, 1991).

Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans have comparable literary and publishing heritages. Palomino (1988), for example, analyzed the portrayal of Japanese Americans and found that their portraits in children's literature were limited. Most books portrayed quaint customs or model Japanese Americans. Alternatives depicting Japanese Americans as multifaceted individuals existed, albeit outside mainstream publishing. Palomino labeled many of the works of authors such as Toshio Mori, Momoko Iko, and Milton Murayama as working-class novels, plays, and poems. Native Americans also have small presses that provide a forum for voices excluded from mainstream presses. One press, The Greenfield Review Press, publishes literature that reflects authentic cultural traditions of a variety of nations. Many Latino authors rely on Arte Publico for publication (Barbuto, 1991).

Authors, intellectuals, parents, children, and activists continually requested multiethnic literature. The role of librarians cannot be underestimated. Librarians such as Augusta Baker, Charlemae Rollins, and Doris Seale

published articles, reviews, and recommended reading lists that contained books apprising children of the achievements and literature of people of color.

Occasionally clichés such as "out of the mouths of babes" capture a significant truth. This happened in 1965, when Nancy Larrick visited a preschool in New York City. A five-year-old African American girl asked her why the children in books were always white. Larrick did not have the answer, but she conducted a survey of children's publishers to determine why. Larrick (1965) queried publishers about the books published that contained illustrations of Negroes or had plots which featured Negroes. Of the 5,206 books published between 1962 and 1964, 349 or 6.7 percent included one or more Negroes. The four publishers with the largest lists, Franklin Watts, Macmillan, Doubleday, and Harper & Row, published a total of 866 books with 4.2 percent featuring Negroes; eight publishers produced only "all-white" books (p. 64).

The Children's Interracial Book Council grew, in part, out of Larrick's article and responses to it. Elinor Sinnette, commenting upon the CIBC, stated: "It is no accident that Negro history and Negro identification have been forgotten. Our society has contrived to make the American Negro a rootless person. The Council for Interracial Books for Children has been formed to relieve this situation" (Larrick, 1965, p. 85).

A transformation occurred in publishing. Publishers heeded the requests of parents, teachers, children, librarians, and other interested adults. The number of books about African Americans increased dramatically in the 1970s. Chall et al. (1979) reported that the numbers had increased to 14.4 percent for African Americans. The number of books about Asian, Latino, and Native Americans increased, but not so dramatically (Nieto, 1982; Asian American Book Project, 1981; Stensland, 1979).

Sims (1983) reexamined the "all-White world" of children's books to determine whether progress has been maintained and assessed the status of African Americans specifically. She argued that a literary census could not gauge fundamental changes in content. Sims found that three issues were still apparent: (1) the relationship between choice of primary audience and presentation of character and events; (2) the author's interpretation of the term *Afro-American experience*; and (3) the author's perspective as an insider or outsider in relation to the cultural group portrayed. Further, she found that three categories of books emerged. The first was social conscience books, apparently designed to create a social conscience among white children. Melting-pot books, the second category, presented a homogeneous portrait of America with no racial conflicts; these were primarily picture books. The last category, culturally conscious books, were portrayals told from the point of view of African American characters; these books were set in African American families or communities. Sims considered these books as literature written for African American children.

Sims Bishop (1990) reported that a "total of nineteen books about Hispan-

ics, fifteen nonfiction and four books of folk stories and legends" were published in the previous publishing cycle. Far fewer books about Asian and Native Americans were published during the same cycle. Indeed, publishing seems to have reverted to the world that Larrick critiqued in 1965.

Finally, Mildred Taylor (1990), author of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, a Newbery Medal winner and one of the few books about people of color to sell more than 100,000 copies in 1990, discussed the reasons why she writes books that reflect African American experiences. She wrote about the pain and embarrassment she felt when her class discussed "the Negro":

> Though I was a good student, there were times when I did not want to go to school, and at no time was that greater than when we studied the Civil War, because it meant that we would also be studying the Negro. And there was never any pride in that for me, not the way the Negro was depicted. Too often the history books we read in class, and the educational movies we saw, portrayed blacks as docile, subservient, almost moronic people, contented and happy with slavery. They taught of a people happy and contented with their way of life still, a people with no past except slavery and not much future. I remember there was no pride in that history; no pride like that I felt when I heard the stories told by my father and other members of my family. (p. 740)

The need to see oneself positively, truthfully, and heroically prompted Taylor to write her seven historical novels. These same needs prompt Asian, Latino, and Native American authors as well and keep parents searching for literature that does not cause their children pain or embarrassment.

The literature that Taylor and others write is often difficult to find. The literature, to use a popular term, is marginalized. Author John Wideman (1990) provided a perceptive explanation of marginalization:

> Since we're seen as marginal politically, economically, and culturally, African-American writers have a special, vexing stake in reforming, revitalizing, the American imagination. . . . As has always been the case, in order to break into print we must be prepared to deal with the extra-literary voices that have conspired to keep us silent, or our stories, novels, and poems will continue to be treated as marginally as our lives, unhinged, unattached to the everyday reality of "mainstream," majority readers. Magazine editors know that their jobs depend upon purveying images the public recognizes and approves, so they seldom include our fictions, and almost never choose those which transcend stereotypes and threaten to expose the fantasies of superiority, the bedrock lies and brute force that sustain the majority's power over the other. Framed in foreign, inimical contexts, minority stories appear at best as exotic slices of life and local color, at worst as ghettoized irrelevancies. (pp. v-vi)

The authors address a number of themes reflective of current trends, the art in many of the picture books wins critical awards occasionally, and some of the authors experiment with form. Yet many of the authors cannot transcend the marginalized status they inherit, and many of their books are unavailable in spite of the boom in children's literature. What are the critical aspects of that boom, and why is multiethnic children's literature not a part?

Current Status of Children's Literature: Publishers' Best Dream

Many articles detailing the boom in children's literature were published during the first years of the decade (Roback, 1990b; 1990c; 1990d; 1991). Book sales doubled between 1980 and 1985 and were expected to double again by the end of 1990. Industry analysts expected sales of children's books to exceed 1 billion in 1991 and increase to 1.5 billion by 1994. Vast changes in children's book publishing occurred between 1970 and 1987 (McDowell, 1988). Multinational corporations purchased smaller concerns. For example, Harper & Row was acquired by Rupert Murdoch's publishing empire. Other acquisitions included Robert Maxwell's purchase of Macmillan and Matsushita Electric Industrial Company's purchase of G. P. Putnam's Sons (Elie, 1991). Children's book publishing became a key component of publishing companies' profits. These acquisitions will reshape the relationships that existed in publishing. It is quite possible that the "genteel" enterprise of children's book publishing will have to accommodate greater adherence to marketing strategies and bottom lines.

Additional evidence of significant changes in children's book publishing is found in the growth of bookstores specializing in children's literature (Roback, 1990c; McDowell, 1988). In the early 1980s, fewer than 350 bookstores specializing in children's literature existed in the United States. By the end of 1990, the number had increased significantly. Further, children's independent, chain, and specialty bookstores indicated that the amount of space devoted to children's books would increase during 1991 (Roback, 1990c). Most of these stores planned to expand their stock and increase the amount of space devoted to ancillary materials such as audiotapes.

Several trends in book sales were evident in 1990. The vast majority of titles sold in bookstores were selections from publishers' backlists, numbering half to two-thirds of sales (Roback, 1990c). Most of the backlists consisted of titles written by authors such as Judy Blume, Chris Van Allsburg, Dr. Seuss, and Beverly Cleary, books written by celebrities, books with a Christmas or winter theme, books with gimmicks, books with crossover appeal, and books with Sesame Street characters (Roback, 1991). Several Newbery Medal winners were among bestselling backlist titles, such as *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (Cleary, 1983), *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (MacLachlan, 1985), *Hatchet* (Paulsen, 1987), and *Bridge to Terebithia* (Paterson, 1977). After remaining on the *New York Times* bestseller lists for seemingly endless weeks, the Waldo books represented the tops in hardback sales in children's books. These books accounted for

20 percent of all hardback books sold (Roback, 1991). Paperback bestsellers were the Berenstain Bears series, books by Mercer Mayer, and the Babysitters Club series (Roback, 1991).

Many of these books were purchased by adults and children who did not seek the advice of librarians or teachers. Book buyers no longer require the assistance of children's book specialists. The proliferation of children's bookstores and the selling of children's books in every conceivable venue shifted the balance of critical and advisory power (Reid and Reuter, 1990). Publishers would have to adopt different strategies for marketing books to libraries, classroom teachers, bookstores, and parents. Mothers purchased most of the children's books in general, independent, specialty, chain, and children's bookstores (Roback, 1990c). The number of fathers purchasing children's books in all categories was "quite small" (Roback, 1990c). Surprisingly, children were the second largest group of purchasers in general bookstores, and grandparents were number two in chain bookstores (Roback, 1990c). The most effective methods for promoting books in children's bookstores were author signings and readings, and storytelling. In other types of bookstores, in-store displays and newsletters proved beneficial, too (Roback, 1990c).

Other factors fueling the surge in children's book sales were the renewed emphasis on literacy, especially emergent literacy and the influence of the whole-language movement (Ohanian, 1991). However, shrinking textbook budgets and state regulations made switching to literature-based instruction difficult. Further, the influence of baby boomers cannot be underestimated. Many possessed the discretionary income that enabled them to purchase extensive libraries for their children, as evidenced by the set of children's classics offered by F. A. O. Schwartz in 1990.

A number of other trends were evident (Reid and Reuter, 1990; Roback, 1990a, 1990d). These included more efficient distribution systems, increased specialization, the rise of the mega-selling hardback, tie-ins with other entertainment forms, book club wars, greater demand for picture books, application of FTC antitrust laws, and the invasion of the market by adult and celebrity authors. One minor trend was the recognition of the need for multiethnic and multicultural literature: "Changing social realities and concerns are being mirrored in children's books—most notably in books reflecting multicultural experiences, and in titles on the importance of protecting the environment and endangered species" (Roback, 1990a, p. 117). However, an analysis of one survey noted that only 4.5 percent of respondents (booksellers and subscribers to *Publishers Weekly*) reported a strong demand for multicultural titles (Roback, 1990c).

Herein lies the paradox. Many educators cite a need for multicultural/multiethnic literature (Sims Bishop, 1990), yet few booksellers note a concurrent increase in demand for the books. Independent publishers delineated a number of factors that limited their efforts to provide books to readers (Igus, 1990). Frequently cited barriers were the reluctance of major chain bookstores to handle the works of smaller publishers; the reluctance of dis-

tributors to stock books; a perception among many that a limited market exists for the books; and the lack of capital to promote books in a manner comparable to that employed by major publishers.

One major factor contributing to the marginalization of multiethnic literature in general and African American literature in particular is the belief that the books lack universal themes or character types or that the books appeal only to members of the group portrayed (Sims Bishop, 1990; Spears-Bunton, 1990). Consequently, many well-written and wonderful books go unread. This is not to suggest that these books will appeal to every child, but rather to acknowledge the fact that most children do not have the opportunity to read the literature at all. Some evidence supporting this contention is found in the annual review of bestsellers appearing in *Publishers Weekly*.

For the calendar year 1990, only eleven books featuring people of color were either paperback or hardback bestsellers (Roback, 1991). These included *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (M. Taylor, 1976), *Sounder* (Armstrong, 1972), *The Cay* (T. Taylor, 1979), *Lon Po Po* (Young, 1989), *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks, 1982), *The Return of the Indian* (Banks, 1987), *Sadako and the Paper Cranes* (Coerr, 1979), *The Secret of the Indian* (Banks, 1989), and two Babysitters Club books—*Jessi and the Superbrat* (Martin, 1989) and *Jessi's Babysitter* (Martin, 1990). Only *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and *Lon Po Po* can be labeled "culturally conscious." That is, they reflect the perspectives, traditions and culture of the portrayed group in an authentic manner. The Babysitters Club books, *Jessi and the Superbrat* (Martin, 1989) and *Jessi's Babysitter* (Martin, 1990), and *Sadako and the Paper Cranes* (Coerr, 1979) respectively, present credible African-American and Asian heroines whose experiences are realistic. If books were purchased on the basis of quality alone, then 1990 tradebooks such as *Cousins* (Hamilton), *Baseball in April and Other Stories* (Soto), and *Aida* (Price) would be runaway bestsellers.

Despite these barriers, some cause for optimism exists. The next section examines challenges to the marginalized status of multiethnic literature, using African American children's literature as the touchstone.

Breaking the Barriers

A number of individuals concerned with their inability to purchase books about African Americans opened publishing companies and bookstores, and created book clubs. For instance, Wade and Cheryl Hudson (1991) founded Just Us Books after having difficulty locating positive images in literature for their child. The Hudsons described the factors that precipitated their involvement in publishing. Wade Hudson referred to the negative effects of growing up in a segregated community and seeing no reflections of himself in electronic or print media. The need to read something about himself also prompted the creation of the publishing company. Cheryl Wade, too, encountered few images of herself or for her child and decided to assume the responsibility

of providing children with literature that embodied specific features: value-centered, actual/factual, culturally authentic, positive, encompassing a range of perspectives, self-affirming, possessed of strong, three-dimensional characters, well-written, attractive, and affordable. She believes that publishers can and should foster this kind of literature. Moreover, she contends that the resulting literature need not be propaganda or pabulum.

Just Us Books attempts to improve the status of literature written by African Americans through the publication of *Harambee*, a newspaper for young readers, coloring/activity books, concept books, picture books, and information books. Thus far, in three years, they have sold over 350,000 copies of books with titles such as *Afro-Bets ABC Book, Afro-Bets Book of Black Heroes,* and *Bright Eyes, Brown Skin.* In addition, they have entered into special agreements with distributors and wholesalers such as Red Sea Press and Book Source as well as with individuals who assume responsibility for sales in a particular geographic location.

A new generation of bookstores emerged as well. These new bookstores, for instance HueMan in Denver and The Shrine of the Black Madonna in Atlanta and Detroit, devote considerable shelf space to children's literature. Several offer mail order services. Many are beginning to sponsor author readings, which are not numerous in African American communities. Other African American organizations generate publicity and support for these ventures. For example, *Essence* magazine, the major periodical marketed to African American women, featured a profile of Clara Villarosa, the owner of HueMan bookstore. In addition, the magazine highlights children's books in its book review column and the section of the magazine devoted to parenting. These booksellers and others like them are crucial to the marketing of multiethnic literature. A few are located in integrated communities, but many serve African American communities. Relatively few major chain bookstores are located in African American communities or they provide limited selections of multiethnic literature. Therefore, the role of these independents becomes even more essential.

Book clubs offer individuals the opportunity to purchase books in specific categories, and shop-at-home convenience. School book clubs such as Lucky, SeeSaw, Trumpet, and Tab offer extensive selections and reduced prices that appeal to parents and children. Janus Adams attempted to provide the same services for individuals who wanted to purchase literature featuring African Americans by founding the Harambee Book Club in 1989. Response was immediate and overwhelming; the book club has been featured in newspapers such as the New York Times.

Publishers can help sustain these positive efforts if they implement what Cheryl Hudson of Just Us Books characterized as an "aggressive and fair policy which involves the recruiting, training, and retaining of people of color" (1991). Publishers can initiate a number of actions that may ameliorate the marginal status of multiethnic literature.

Suggestions for Publishers

First, publishers should heed the exhortation of Cheryl Hudson: they should recruit, train, and retain people of color. Elie (1991) assessed the status of African Americans in publishing. He found that a few highly qualified individuals such as Adrienne Ingram, editor and vice-president of G. P. Putnam's Sons, and Carol Hall, executive editor of Simon and Schuster, acquired key positions in the top echelon of publishing. According to Elie, their progress is exceptional. African Americans comprise 4.0 percent of publishing officials and managers, 6.1 percent of professional and technical staff, and 4.5 percent of sales workers (p. 104). One could assume that comparable figures exist for Asian, Latino, and Native Americans. The argument is not that percentages employed should equal percentages in the national population, but rather that a more diverse workforce might yield greater diversity in types of books published.

Second, publishers should reinstitute the writer's contests of the late sixties and seventies. Past contests resulted in the discovery of writers such as Walter Dean Myers and Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve. However, in order to attract potential authors, publishers should place advertisements in literary magazines as well as in periodicals directed to a particular group such as *Ebony* and the *Bilingual Review*. This action has the potential to generate significant numbers of manuscripts. *Ebony*, for example, sponsors a short-story contest each year. The contest yields hundreds of submissions culminating in judgment by a panel of nationally known authors and public figures, a monetary prize, and publication of the winner's story. A similar contest for children's stories should generate comparable responses.

Third, publishers should consider entering into joint ventures with small, independent publishers such as Arte Publico, the Children's Press, or the Greenfield Review Press. These joint ventures could provide smaller presses with larger advertising budgets, the benefit of experience, and increased access to major chain bookstores, distributors, and wholesalers. The smaller presses, in turn, could provide larger publishing houses with access to the specialized markets they serve. In addition, school book clubs could provide the offerings of small presses.

Fourth, author visits to schools motivate students to read and write. Publishers might consider sponsoring writer- and illustrator-in-residence programs. However, school districts selected should be those least likely to have literature-based literacy programs, whole-language programs, or the discretionary income to fund authors' and illustrators' visits to urban and rural school systems. Author Walter D. Myers (1991) spoke about the writing program he conducts with "inner-city" adolescents and the ways in which they shaped the content of his novels. He found that their lives were absent from literature, and he desired to validate their perspectives, dreams, and pain. Certainly, these adolescents benefit from the guidance in writing they receive from Myers.

Fifth, a number of "minority" publications reach markets that mainstream publishers cannot. The phenomenal success of Johnson Publications with its *Jet*, *Ebony*, and *Ebony Man* publications and radio and television stations demonstrate the potential for reaching this largely untapped market. Mainstream publishers should consider advertising in these media.

Sixth, publishers should consider establishing marketing agreements with fraternal, social, and religious organizations. Again, Johnson Publications provides a model. The company encourages various institutions to sell subscriptions to its magazines. In return, the organizations receive a generous profit from the publisher. Such joint ventures offer numerous benefits for all.

Finally, publishers might consider lowering the prices of books sold to financially strapped districts. Granted publishing is a for-profit endeavor, but a dire need exists for some philanthropic actions. Consumers can assist by writing government representatives to encourage tax incentives.

These recommended actions, if implemented, can help provide a foundation for ensuring that children's literature depicts and celebrates the country's diversity. Then, perhaps, ten- to fifteen-year reviews of the "all-white world" of children's books will no longer remain a publishing staple.

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